



Opening Comments by John R. Sholtis, Jr.
Board of Trustees for the Connecticut State University System
Higher Educational and Employment Advancement Committee
Informational Forum
Wednesday, May 26, 2010

Good afternoon, Senator Handley, Representative Willis, and members of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement. My name is John Sholtis, and I am a member of the Board of Trustees for the Connecticut State University System.

I am here today representing our Board Chairman, Karl Krapek, who was not available due to a prior commitment. I am a member of the Executive Committee of the Board, and I appreciate your permitting me to sit in for our chairman. As you know, the members of the Board of Trustees sit as volunteers, and have a fiduciary obligation to represent not any one group or individual, but the students, faculty and staff of the university system, and all the people of Connecticut in carrying out our statutory obligations and responsibilities.

At the outset, I would like to say that throughout this process Chancellor Carter has acted in concert with the Board's policies and expectations, and any notion of an aggrandizement of power on his part is unjustified, inaccurate, and counterproductive.

I would also like to make a number of points, very briefly, which I believe will be of help to you.

1. I am well aware of the fact that state law precludes public discussion of any performance evaluations of a university president, without their written consent, whether the evaluation was conducted by the Board, or the Chancellor. So I will, of necessity, refrain from commenting on the contents of those evaluations.
2. I would like to mention that the university presidents and the chancellor "serve at the pleasure of the Board of Trustees," as stated in Board policy. They can, therefore, be non-continued "without cause or explanation." This is not new – this employment status has not been altered in any way by the current Board or Chancellor.
3. In our view, the ultimate power regarding the status of university presidents remains in the hands of the Board. The change in procedure was just that – a change in procedure – and not an abrogation of Board authority. And the way in which this revision was accomplished was consistent with other changes to Board procedures that have been made in the past. In fact, just a year earlier, a policy review led to a change in the notice period for presidents, from 12 months to 3 months, although the current presidents were grandfathered in and must receive 12 months' notice.

4. Under Board policy, the Chancellor is the individual responsible for supervising, managing and evaluating the performance of the university presidents. Only the Chancellor reports directly to the Board. As such, it is absolutely appropriate for the individual responsible for evaluating an employee to initiate a process – in effect making a recommendation regarding that individual.

5. Revisions to Board policy in 2009 regarding the procedure under which a president could be non-continued did not create any additional expense related to the current situation. In fact, if a non-continuation had occurred under the pre-2009 policy, the fiscal liability would have been identical – the president would have been entitled to pay, benefits and title for one year, and would also have been eligible to apply for a sabbatical leave.

6. The selection process for an interim president at Southern was virtually identical to that which occurred when interim presidents were appointed at Central and Eastern Connecticut State Universities by the previous Chancellor. The selection was made consistent with Board guidelines, and the Executive Committee and Board were appropriately informed.

The selection process for a permanent president will also follow the same process utilized previously and will include opportunities for meaningful input from students, faculty and staff, and members of the university community as a whole.

With those brief points made, I would welcome any questions you may have.